

AIR

SGAA- 14652

Chief, SE

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OBHUNT

Incident at Menidi Involving Standbys

REF: C U9748, 6 March 1955

Action Requested: None; for information and files.

Synopsis: a. Riot at Menidi Taverna.
b. AIRWISE held for questioning.
c. Agent Standbys relocated.

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3020
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

Account of Developments:

1. Early morning 1 March AIRWISE telephoned this office to inform us he and some others of our agents had been involved in a serious fight in Menidi the night before (28 February, a Greek holiday). A meeting was arranged immediately at the Cave.

2. The first call by AIRWISE was followed by a call from AIPUMP, also advising us of the fracas and the fact that the three W/Ts were involved. They were instructed to remain in their hotel, stay off the streets and we would contact them for a meeting later in the day.

3. A third call was received in rapid succession from RNORDAIN, who also advised us of the incident. In addition he reported that AIRWISE and AIRBORNE had spent the night at his hotel room and that AIRSLACK was involved. RNORDAIN was not present or involved in the proceedings.

4. C U and C U proceeded to the Cave for the 9 a.m. meeting with AIRWISE and AIRBORNE. The story and people involved as recounted by AIRWISE is as follows:

a. Yesterday afternoon (28 February) AIRWAY, AIPUMP and AIRBLOWN were visiting at the home of AIRWISE at his invitation. Late in the afternoon, AIRWISE suggested they retire to the small coffee shop and taverna partly owned by AIRBRAKE. The group comprised the following individuals of concern to us:

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AIRWISE
AIRBORNE
AIRSLACK

AIRWAY
AIRBLOWN
AIPUMP

In addition, AIRBRAKE, AIRBUILT and the father of AIRWISE were involved.

b. At the nearby tables were two groups of five and seven Greeks drinking heavily. The Greeks became unruly, abusive, started arguing among themselves and breaking glasses. AIRWISE attempted to reason with a member of the group and received a blow in the groin for his trouble.

c. The above action precipitated a general free-for-all involving the Albanians mentioned above and the two groups of Greeks, which included some soldiers. Upon the arrival of reinforcements for the Greeks the Albanians escaped through a rear door of the taverna.

d. In an alleyway adjoining the taverna, AIRWISE, AIRBORNE, AIRSLACK, AIRBUILT, AIPUMP, AIRWAY and AIRBLOWN were intercepted by a group of Greeks, including a soldier brandishing a knife. AIPUMP and AIRBORNE disarmed the soldier and the Albanians managed to make good their escape and dispersed in several directions.

e. AIRWISE, AIRBORNE and AIRSLACK spent the night with REORDAIN at his hotel in Athens. AIPUMP, AIRWAY and AIRBLOWN also made their way back to Athens and spent the night in their hotel. None of them had attempted to return to Menidi. (It was later learned that AIRBUILT had been admitted to a hospital in Athens for treatment of cuts and other wounds.) AIRWISE was surprised when [] informed him two Greeks were hospitalized with stab wounds, one quite seriously. He insisted he was not aware of any of the Albanians using any knives and the only knife he did see was the one taken from the Greek soldier.

5. AIRSLACK, AIRBORNE and AIRWISE were retained at the Cave and [] and [] were advised that all our agents who were involved in the fracas had reported and were in our custody. [] informed us this was satisfactory to them and the only person the police were interested in and wanted to question was AIRWISE. Arrangements were made to turn AIRWISE over to BUCANTAR for police questioning and AIRBORNE and AIRSLACK were taken to Annapolis and their I.D. cards withheld.

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6. Later the same day (1 March) [] and [] met with AIPUMP, AIRWAY and AIRBLOWN and elicited their story of the incident. Their report was substantially the same as AIRWISE's. AIPUMP stated that when he and AIRBORNE disarmed the Greek soldier, he threw the knife as far down the alley as he could. The men were advised they were in our custody and instructed to remain in their rooms, going out only to eat and to take turns for that. All the agents involved were severely reprimanded for congregating as they did. It was contrary to persistent instructions on our part and it is felt this incident provided an excellent object lesson for all of them. To some extent we are gratified with their behaviour after the affair, i.e.

a. When they realized how far the fracas had developed, they made every effort to extricate themselves for reasons of security.

b. They all reported to [] as quickly as was possible.

8. AIRWISE was held by the police for two days. He states he was well treated and constantly reassured that there was nothing to worry about. AIRWISE also said he was aware of our influence throughout the entire proceedings and credits his good treatment to this fact. Several Greek citizens have come forward as witnesses in AIRWISE's behalf and in general his position appears secure.

9. When AIRWISE was released, [] and [] met with him for further questioning. At this time it was learned that his family had retained AIMARI to represent his case. AIMARI was not instrumental in the release of AIRWISE and actually accomplished nothing. AIRWISE was advised of the dim view we took of this action and instructed him not to come in contact with AIMARI again.

10. AIRWISE and AIRBORNE are now at the Annapolis safehouse. AIRBUILT and his father have moved out of Menidi and are living in Pireaus. AIRBRAKE is in Athens and AIRSLACK is once again with RWORDAIN. AIPUMP, AIRWAY and AIRBLOWN have moved to a Pireaus hotel and are attending the Benchfitters Course, which they started 7 March.

11. [] and [] verify the fact the fight was provoked by the Greeks. Pending the decision by the Greeks to hold a trial all the agents concerned have been relocated and are in our custody. Headquarters will be advised of all developments as they occur.

HAL/RSO/nkr
19 March 1955
Distribution:

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